

MINUTES OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'
BRIEFING MEETING OF APRIL 1, 2025.

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Briefing Meeting on April 1, 2025, in the Commission Chamber at 200 College Street in downtown Asheville, North Carolina at 3:00 p.m.

Present: Chair Amanda Edwards; Vice-Chair Martin Moore; Commissioner Terri Wells, Commissioner Al Whitesides; Commissioner Parker Sloan; Commissioner Jennifer Horton; Commissioner Drew Ball.

The following items were reviewed.

- Helene Update

Dane Pederson, Solid Waste Director, provided an update on debris pickup. He explained that the right of way debris removal has ended. Residents are encouraged to sign up for PPDR for debris removal and to continue to report debris hot spots in the right of way to the call center. Over 1.22 million cubic yards of debris have been removed from the right of way in City of Asheville, Black Mountain, and unincorporated Buncombe County. He introduced a new Debris Collection Zone Map Tool that can be found on the One Buncombe website. Residents can enter their address in the search bar to check the status of debris removal in their zone. Pederson explained that Hurricane Helene demolition requests are available to residents and local businesses and that applications must be received by April 15th through the PPDR program. Pederson went on to note that waterway debris removal continues through June 1st and that over 696,253 cubic yards have been removed from the waterways.

Ryan Cole with Emergency Services provided an update on the current wildfire activity. He explained the elements that drive wildfires are the low humidity, increased winds and temperature. There are two wildfire seasons in WNC, spring and fall and that compounding factors include invasive species, development and weather volatility. Cole explained wildfire mitigation strategies include defensible space around structures; debris removal & vegetation management; fire-resistant building practices; community preparedness & engagement; fire breaks; and prescribed burns. Cole highlighted resources available which include FireWise Resources which has resources to assist homeowners, program participants, and other wildfire stakeholders as they travel down the path to wildfire risk reduction.

- Floodplain Management

Nate Pennington, Planning Director, provided background information related to floodplain management. He provided the purpose, local ordinance alignment & strategy, and an overview of the Community Rating System. Pennington highlighted that the County's flood standards are fully contained within our flood ordinance; they are not conflated with other development ordinances. Buncombe's flood ordinance is largely based on the State's model ordinance BUT it also includes (currently) higher standards that exceed the minimum NFIP requirements specifically – a 2-foot freeboard, enhanced protection of utilities/trades. He then explained the Community Rating System (CRS) which has approximately 1,700 plus communities across the United States and provides for flood insurance policy holder discounts based on a point scale for adopting higher standards. CRC is consistent with Hazard Mitigation

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Plan and Comprehensive Plan. He explained that joining the CRS is a multi-step, highly involved process. The requirements include: additional staff noting that the current CFM staff are limited to three (3) FTE's including the Planning Director. Due to extreme regulatory/permitting volume, the Planning Department is currently augmenting with contract staff resources. Additionally, an audit would be required as well as Public Engagement, to include the Planning Board and Board of Commissioners involvement. He noted that Staff will need to work closely with the State NCEM Flood Mapping Division to coordinate the next mapping cycle, model ordinance, and alignment of our customized CRS program. Pennington added that Staff recommends a tiered entry into the program. The Board asked what is needed to move forward. Manager Pinder explained that at least two-three full time employees would be needed to move forward, and she requested that the Board let her know if they want to prioritize moving forward, as it is not currently included in the budget.

- Reduce & Rebuild Permitting Proposal

Rafael Baptista, Strategy and Innovation, provided background information related to the request that the Board approve a fee reduction of 50% for Buncombe County residential permits associated with documented Helene damaged or destroyed primary residences beginning June 1st, 2025, and continuing until December 31st, 2025. He explained that the fee reduction would be limited to Helene impacted primary residences. He noted that this would affect four departments: Air Quality, Permits and Inspections, Planning and Onsite/Wastewater. He noted the fiscal impacts as it relates to what's budgeted, current projections and the impact of the proposed Reduce to Rebuild fee reductions.

Stacey Wood provided an update on the new Helene Resource Center (HRC) located at 94 Coxe Avenue in downtown Asheville. She noted that the Weaverville Town Hall DRC will close operations on Friday, April 4. The staff from Weaverville Town Hall will resume operations at 94 Coxe Avenue on Monday, April 7. The Helene Resource Center will "soft launch" to the public on Monday, April 7. While this will not be advertised to the public, the HRC will be open to those who come to the center for Helene related services beginning on Monday. She also noted that the Fairview Library DRC will close on April 11. Staff from that location will move to Coxe Ave HRC and begin operating out of the HRC beginning April 14. The official opening of the HRC will be on April 14, 2025 at 8 am. Hours will be 8 am - 5 pm.

MINUTES OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'

REGULAR MEETING OF APRIL 1, 2025.

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Regular Meeting on April 1, 2025, in the Commission Chamber at 200 College Street in downtown Asheville, North Carolina at 3:00 p.m.

Present: Chair Amanda Edwards; Vice-Chair Martin Moore; Commissioner Terri Wells, Commissioner Al Whitesides; Commissioner Parker Sloan; Commissioner Jennifer Horton; Commissioner Drew Ball.

Chair Edwards opened the meeting and provided opening remarks.

CONSENT

1. Approval of the March 18, 2025 Combined Briefing and Regular Meeting Minutes
2. Approval of the March 20, 2025 Special Meeting Minutes
3. Approval of the February Tax Collection Report
4. Resolution to Approve Pyrotechnic Experts for Scheduled Firework Displays
 - a. Resolution
5. Resolution to Appoint the Buncombe County Health Director to Approve the Disinterment and reinterment of Graves in Buncombe County
 - a. Resolution

Commissioner Whitesides made the motion to approve the consent agenda and to follow the agenda as posted. Commissioner Sloan seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Alison Engard – spoke in support of funding schools.

Christina Mason – spoke in support of funding schools.

Dane Whoshetly – spoke in support of funding schools.

Presentations

1. National Public Health Week Proclamation

Commissioner Horton read the Proclamation to Ellis Mathis and Public Health staff. Each April, public health associations unite communities nationwide to celebrate NPHW, recognizing public health contributions and addressing key health issues.

2. Child Abuse Prevention Month Proclamation

Commissioner Moore read the Proclamation to Rebecca Smith. April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month, a time when North Carolina and its statewide partners join Prevent Child Abuse America in connecting with families, communities, prevention advocates, and supporters

to focus on the creation of an ecosystem of primary prevention in the U.S. and emphasize the importance of building a narrative of hope for the future of children and families.

New Business

1. Selection of Bank Lender and Authorization of Approving Resolution for 2025 Equipment Financing

Mason Scott, Assistant Finance Director, provided background information. He explained that the purchase of certain capital equipment and vehicles was approved along with the fiscal year 2025 budgets for the General Fund and Solid Waste Enterprise Fund. County staff seek to enter into a financing agreement for the purchase of the equipment. Equipment and vehicles to be funded through the agreement include a solid waste compactor; ambulances, Sheriff vehicles, and related upfits; and vehicles to be used in general governmental operations. Pinnacle bank is recommended for selection as the lending agency based on their response to a competitive solicitation process and their offer of the lowest interest rate of 3.5%. County staff intend to finance no more than \$6 million, which will fund the purchase of the equipment and vehicles and pay for the costs of professional services related to the financing process.

Commissioner Whitesides made the motion to approve the resolution authorizing County staff to enter into a financing agreement with Pinnacle Bank. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Moore and approved unanimously.

2. Hazard Mitigation Grant Agreement Interlocal Agreements

Rafael Baptista provided background information. He explained that the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) is a federal program administered by North Carolina Emergency Management (NCEM) to reduce hazards and risks, including the acquisition of repeatedly damaged residential and commercial properties after disasters. HMGP is a partnership between NCEM and Buncombe County. These interlocal agreements (ILAs) define the relationship between Buncombe County and the City of Asheville, the Town of Black Mountain, and the Town of Weaverville. The ILAs allow property within a municipality to be transferred directly from the state to that municipality. The County assumes no long-term obligations or financial impact under these agreements. Commissioner Wells asked why the Town of Woodfin is not participating. Baptista explained that there are no current applicants there.

Commissioner Wells made the motion to approve the resolution authorizing Buncombe County to enter into interlocal agreements with the City of Asheville, Town of Black Mountain, and the Town of Weaverville to administer the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sloan and carried unanimously.

3. Resolution to Expand the Affordable Housing Committee Membership

Jonothan Jones provided background information. He explained that the Affordable Housing Committee was created by a motion of the Board of Commissioners on February 5, 2019 to engage with community partners, solicit public input and make housing affordability policy and funding recommendations. The Affordable Housing Committee currently consists of

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three (3) Commissioners members. The Affordable Housing Committee is recommending the Board expand the membership to five (5) members to include the existing three (3) Commissioners members and (2) additional Buncombe County residents.

Commissioner Sloan made the motion to approve the Resolution Amending the Number of Members of the Affordable Housing Committee. Commissioner Ball seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

Approval of Helene Related Amendments to Affordable Housing Services Program Guidelines

Jonathon Jones provided background information. He explained that Buncombe County's Affordable Housing Services Program (AHSP) Emergency Repair Program provides repair assistance up to \$25,000 per household which is secured by a lien for any repairs funded at or above \$15,000 (which reduces by \$15,000 in year one, \$5,000 in year 2, and \$5,000 in year three). Given the number of homes in Buncombe County with Helene damage and repair needs, non-profit partners receiving Buncombe County AHSP Emergency Home Repair funds requested AHSP changes for homes with Helene-related repair needs. The request was: (1) to increase the maximum per household repair assistance from \$25,000 to \$50,000; and (2) to eliminate lien requirements for Helene-related repairs. The Affordable Housing Committee supported the changes as requested and recommended such to the Board of Commissioners. Chair Edwards thanked staff for making the requested changes. Commissioner Moore asked about the staff resources. Jones explained that staff will work with partners to resolve the issue and go through the Affordable Housing Committee.

Chair Edwards made the motion to approve an amendment to Buncombe County's Affordable Housing Services Program (AHSP) Emergency Repair Program for assistance to households with Helene-related repair needs as follows: (1) to increase the Maximum Assistance to \$50,000 where costs exceed sources of support; and (2) to establish a lien requirement where the repair is funded at or above \$15,000 which will reduce by \$30,000 in year 1, \$10,000 in year 2, and \$10,000 in year three. Commissioner Moore seconded the motion, and it was carried unanimously.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

Mason Scott, Dee Williams and Tim Love were reappointed to the Mountain Community Capital Fund Operating Committee.

Meeting adjourned at 5:47 p.m.